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FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2271  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000049

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/17/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: CHIEF OF OFFICE CHARGED WITH GRANTING SECURITY  
CLEARANCES MAY NOT BE ELIGIBLE TO HOLD ONE

Classified By: CDA Keith A. Eddins for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary. Frantisek Blanarik, the Head of Slovakia's National Security Office (NBU), is under pressure after the exposure of archived files related to information he provided to the Military Counterintelligence Service (VKR) when he was a soldier in the mid-1980s. If Blanarik provided information to a Communist-era intelligence service knowingly, he would be ineligible for a security clearance, and thus ineligible to run the office that judges the trustworthiness of others. Blanarik's security clearance was granted in 2006, under the government of Mikulas Dzurinda, when he was appointed Defense Attache to Ukraine. Prime Minister Fico and Head of the Parliament's Defense and Security Committee, Rudolf Pucik (SNS), initially defended Blanarik, but have been silent since the most incriminating stories were published on January 16. The Parliamentary Committee responsible for oversight of the NBU will meet again on February 12 to discuss Blanarik's position. End summary.

¶2. (U) Slovakia's NBU is charged with granting security clearances to government officials who come into contact with information classified by Slovakia, NATO and/or the EU. The Head of NBU is required to hold the highest level clearance. According to the law on the protection of classified information, a person is considered ineligible for such a clearance if he or she "consciously cooperated" with the Secret Police (STB) or an intelligence service of the Czechoslovak People's Army.

¶3. (U) The center-right daily "Hospodarske Noviny" first raised questions about Blanarik's eligibility for a Top-Secret clearance in April 2008, when his file was uncovered in the archives of the VKR in Prague. Markiza television re-opened the issue with a widely viewed report on November 26, 2008, after references to information provided by Blanarik were found in other files of the VKR. On January 16, 2009, the center-right Slovak daily Sme publicized several records from the files of VKR kept in Bratislava in the archives of the Nation's Memory Institute (UPN).

¶4. (U) The sum of the information makes it clear that Blanarik provided information that VKR deemed useful, but leaves open to interpretation whether or not he did so consciously. As recently as December 2008 Blanarik insisted he did not. In his own file, however, it is written that he "proved reliable during cooperation" and "took care to maintain secrecy over his contacts, as well as in obtaining intelligence," which Sme's journalists and others have interpreted to mean he must have cooperated knowingly.

¶5. (U) PM Fico (Smer) and the Chairman of Parliament's Defense and Security Committee, Rudolf Pucik (SNS), both came to Blanarik's defense after the November 2008 reports. Pucik said Blanarik is the first NBU Director who fulfills the political and professional criteria for the position and accused the media of engaging in a "moral striptease." Fico, without commenting on the substance of the allegations, said he could not imagine a "more beautiful combination for the Prime Minister" than to have an NBU Chief whose security

clearance was granted by the previous government.

¶6. (U) In response to a question about Blanarik's security clearance, former PM Mikulas Dzurinda responded by accusing Jan Mojzis, who ran the NBU under Dzurinda's second government from 2002 ) 2003, of "handing out stamps in the interests of STB officers and various business interests according to his own wishes." (Comment: Dzurinda's second government nearly collapsed in 2003 when he moved to oust Mojzis from the NBU. Mojzis was replaced by Aurel Ugor, who was actually in charge of NBU at the time Blanarik received his clearance in 2006. End comment.)

¶7. (C) Tom Nicholson, a Canadian-born reporter working for Sme, told Poloff that a "Smer person" is pushing the negative stories about Blanarik. Nicholson has no doubt that Blanarik knowingly provided information to the VKR, and claims to have evidence Blanarik may have personally ordered the destruction of several tons of VKR records in 1996, when he ran the Defense Planning Office under then Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar (HzDS). Nicholson believes his informant's motive is related to a business deal that is being contested by two groups that have connections within the government. He does not see the dispute as (another) between Smer and HzDS. Nicholson has talked recently with both Blanarik and Mojzis, and said both men seem to be honest, "straight shooters." He said Mojzis speaks well of Blanarik.

¶8. (U) A December 11 report in the weekly Zurnal (Available from FBIS: EUP20081225059011) cited two unnamed "high-ranking officials of the military intelligence services", who secured security clearances despite one admitting he worked for the

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STB on his resume, and the other having previously left the service after losing secret materials. According to the reporter, 90 percent of STB informers who have applied for a security clearance have been granted one. She sees Fico's attitude toward the Blanarik case as testimony to the government's lack of interest in enforcing the law on security clearances.

¶9. (C) Comment: Although there is no hard evidence that Blanarik cooperated knowingly with the VKR, not even his supporters deny the likelihood that he did. Blanarik was an officer in the Czechoslovak People's Army at a time when most answered the VKR's questions about colleagues' foreign travels and contacts, and all certainly knew why such questions were being asked. According to some, Blanarik is an effective administrator who is being targeted because of a venal dispute. Whether the charges against Blanarik provoke sympathy, disgust or apathy depends on whom you ask. The central issue remains, however, that few of Slovakia's political elite seem concerned about ensuring that the NBU Chief fulfills the legal requirements to hold this sensitive position or about maintaining the organization's reputation amongst its foreign partners.  
EDDINS